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by Alex Wayne

House moderates Tuesday will propose a health care overhaul focused on expanding private insurance coverage, in part by limiting state regulation of insurance plans offered by national corporations.

Rep. Mark Steven Kirk, co-chairman of a group of 34 moderates known as the Tuesday Group, said his group's bill would not expand or create public insurance programs like Medicaid, as others propose to do, nor would it eliminate tax benefits for people with employer-sponsored insurance, as some conservatives have proposed.

"I think it would be the lowest-cost of all the major options being considered, since we don't have a heavy government program involvement," Kirk said in an interview.

But he said he does not yet have estimates of how much the plan would cost or how many people it would cover.

The plan would guarantee that medical decisions made by patients and their doctors could not be contravened by government authorities. It would allow large companies with operations in different states to offer employees a single, national health care plan.

Under the plan, individuals who are not insured through their employers could exclude the cost of insurance from their income taxes, just as workers with employer-sponsored insurance do. And the moderates would also limit medical malpractice lawsuits, including a cap on jury awards to plaintiffs.

Kirk said the goal of the moderates' legislation is to reduce the gap between insurance costs in high-cost states like New Jersey and in low-cost states like California.

This article was edited to comply with Franking Commission guidelines.